



P-20 Council Meeting

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Thursday, September 30, 2010

At the top of my agenda since becoming Governor has been the creation of a high-quality and stable jobs climate. One of the most relevant factors in creating that climate is a highly educated workforce.

Even today, as we have been faced with some of the hardest financial decisions this state has ever known, I've fought hard to protect funding for education.

Over the years, education has always been a concern of mine, in fact, it was the reason I first ran for office, and I've always been a truth-teller – including when talking about education and education reform.

The good news is that this is a time of exciting reform in Arizona for both our education system and economic development efforts.

Development of Arizona's education reform plan, through The Race to The Top application -- and its implementation -- will ensure an internationally competitive education system for all Arizona students.

We have significant buy-in and support from education and business leaders across Arizona and we'll need everyone's continued commitment to move forward.

But, even though we did not receive Race to the Top funding, our work is not done and the economic hardship we currently face cannot, and must not, deter our efforts to implement what we now have all agreed is the best course for change.

We didn't quit when our Round 1 application was unsuccessful -- and **WE WILL NOT QUIT NOW!**

In our Round 2 application, a meaningful, collaborative, and aggressive education reform plan was developed.

If we believe that we've charted the right course for our children we cannot abandon it now.

I'm charging the P-20 Coordinating Council with the task of forging ahead with this effort and to help provide oversight and accountability for implementation of this reform plan. This task starts with prioritization.

One of the strengths of Arizona's Race to the Top application was the strong legislative and policy foundation laid last year. We already made the tough decisions – our plan was, and is, about implementation. However, this is also why the task before us is so urgent.

I think you will agree that the two common themes found throughout the plan, regardless of the reform area being discussed, are the need for strong data systems and training for teachers and principals.

Without these it will be very difficult to implement new standards, assessments, teacher evaluations or turn around struggling schools.

With this in mind, I'm asking the Council and its task forces to review the plan and prioritize or possibly reorder the tasks laid out with these overarching goals in mind.

Furthermore, opportunities to find new funding opportunities or partnerships should be explored.

We must also work hard to utilize the limited funds we DO have at the state, district, and local areas in the most innovative, meaningful and productive manner possible.

State and local entities are the recipients of education grants that should be aligned in achieving reform in a cohesive manner using this plan as our collective roadmap.

We must collaborate even more closely with our foundation and business partners in an unprecedented effort to ensure each and every student throughout this great state of ours is the recipient of the best education possible.

I'd like to have a preliminary report with recommendations by Wednesday, December 15th.

I know this task might seem daunting -- but when I look at what we accomplished this past year and the enthusiasm that remains, I'm confident we can reach our goals.

Before we move ahead, however, I want to pause and recognize the effort and hard work of those who've helped get us to this point.

Over the course of developing the Round 1 and Round 2 applications, the Council and its task forces served as the forum for developing or expanding on most, if not all, of the reforms outlined in our plan.

So, I want to personally thank each of you for your time, energy, and innovative thinking throughout this work.

I want to recognize the chairs of each of the task forces for the leadership, knowledge and expertise they brought from the business community into this process:

-- Cathleen Barton, Marc Osborn, Dave Howell, Jack Lunsford,

-- I want to thank the presentation team of Dr. Karen Butterfield, Dr. Michael Cowan, Rebecca Gau, Eileen Klein, Jacob Moore, and Vince Yanez who traveled to Washington, D.C. and did such an amazing job representing Arizona's students, teachers, and administrators.

And, I want to thank Dr. Paul Koehler and the team from the WestEd Policy Center for their tremendous collaborative efforts and outreach.

The leadership, expertise, patience and considerable knowledge you provided were crucial in bringing together in a cohesive manner the outstanding plan that we now have.

There were also many in the community who worked to help us tell Arizona's story in Washington, including Jaime Molera, Diane McCarthy, and Dr. Jim Zaharis.

I would be remiss if I didn't take time to thank the state staff who committed so much of their time, effort and passion into this work. My heartfelt thanks to Superintendent Tom Horne, Dr. Margaret Dugan, Dr. Karen Butterfield, and the leadership team at the Arizona Department of Education for the key role they played in the development of this education reform plan.

Also, our State Board of Education under the current leadership of Dr. Vicki Balentine and formerly under Jacob Moore has ensured that the necessary supports and policies were in place to make this effort a success.

I would like to thank Dr. Deb Duval for her leadership in our initial effort to begin developing this plan. Dr. Duval played a key role in forming vital partnerships with stakeholders throughout the state and in formulating key initiatives in our plan.

And, my thanks to the Office of Economic Recovery staff -- James Apperson, Matt Hanson, Aaron Sandeen and Dina Martinez.

Finally, I'd like to personally thank members of my staff – Karla Phillips, my education policy adviser, and Debra Raeder-Gay, the Executive Director of this Council. Your tireless effort in the development of this plan is appreciated.

God bless each and every one of you – and, thank you again.

You're making a difference, and I'm proud of you – and I'm proud of what we have done together.

And NOW ... it's time to get back to work!